

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 DPW-01 DHA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /072 W

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R 300616Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6026

INFO AMCONSUL DURBAN

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS PINT SHUM SF

SUBJ: RED CROSS REJECTS CONDITIONS FOR ACCESS TO DETAINEES;

NEWSMEN VISIT ROBBEN ISLAND PRISON

REF: CAPE TOWN 0553

SUMMARY: IN TWO RELATED BUT NOT DIRECTLY - CONNECTED EVENTS, SAG HAS ATTEMPTED TO COUNTER ACCUSATIONS OF MISTREATMENT OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AND DETAINEES. IT OFFERED RED CROSS VISITS TO SECURITY DETAINEES (REJECTED BY RED CROSS DUE TO CONDITIONS ATTACHED) AND FOR FIRST TIME PERMITTED NEWSMEN TO VISIT ROBBEN ISLAND PRISON WHICH HOUSES POLITICAL PRISONERS INCLUDING ANC LEADER NELSON MANDELA. JUSTICE MINISTER KRUGER TOLD REPORTERS THERE WOULD BE "NO REMISSION OF SENTENCES" FOR SECURITY PRISONERS. END SUMMARY

1. DURING YEARLY INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS (ICRC) VISIT TO PRISONERS CONVICTED UNDER SOUTH AFRICAN SECURITY LAWS, ICRC
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PRESIDENT ALEXANDER HAY TOLD PRESS APRIL 26 HE HAD ASKED JUSTICE MINISTER KRUGER FOR PERMISSION TO ALSO VISIT THOSE DETAINED WITHOUT TRIAL ON SECURITY GROUNDS. KRUGER REPORTEDLY AGREED ON CONDITION THAT A MAGISTRATE BE PRESENT DURING EACH VISIT. HAY TOLD REPORTERS HE HAD REJECTED THE OFFER UNDER THIS CONDITION AS IT WAS CONTRARY TO ICRC POLICY. HE SAID ICRC INSISTED ON PRIVATE INTERVIEWS AS THIS WAS ONLY WAY TO HAVE

FRANK DISCUSSIONS.

2. WITH REGARD TO SECURITY PRISONERS, HAY SAID HE FOUND "COMMUNICATIONS BLACKOUT" (DENIAL OF NEWSPAPERS OR RADIOS AND FEW FAMILY VISITS) "VERY SEVERE" AND SAID HE WAS "NOT CONVINCED" THAT THESE WERE NEEDED FOR SECURITY REASONS. HAY SAID HE HOPED KRUGER WOULD RESPOND FAVORABLY TO REQUEST FOR MORE FREQUENT ICRC VISITS TO PRISONERS IN FUTURE. HAY SAID ON BASIS OF PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION LAST YEAR ICRC HAD DETERMINED THERE WAS NO RPT NO NEED FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION INTO CONDITIONS OF BLACKS HELD IN PRIVATE MENTAL INSTITUTIONS AS THEY WERE NOT RPT NOT HELD FOR POLITICAL REASONS.

3. TWENTY-FIVE LOCAL AND FOREIGN NEWSMEN WERE PERMITTED FOR FIRST TIME ON APRIL 25 TO VISIT MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON ON ROBBER ISLAND WHICH HOUSES SOME 370 PRISONERS CONVICTED UNDER VARIOUS SECURITY LAWS. AMONG WELL-KNOWN INMATES ARE 59 YEAR-OLD NELSON MANDELA, FORMER SECRETARY OF AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS SERVING LIFE SENTENCE AND HERMAN JA-TOIVO A FOUNDER MEMBER OF SWAPO SENTENCED TO 20 YEARS IN 1968 FOR TERRORIST ACTIVITY IN NAMIBIA. JUSTICE MINISTER KRUGER TOLD PRESS HE HAD "NO ULTERIOR MOTIVE" IN ARRANGING VISIT AND SAID IT HAD "NO CONNECTION" WITH PRESENCE HERE OF WESTERN DELEGATIONS DISCUSSING FUTURE OF SWA. IN PRESS RELEASE SAME DAY KRUGER SAID JOURNALISTS COULD "TEST FOR THEMSELVES THE TREATMENT AND TRUE CIRCUMSTANCES" OF PRISONERS, WHILE PRISON DIRECTOR IN BRIEFING NEWSMEN REFERRED TO "SERIOUS ALLEGATIONS" MADE IN UN AND OTHER REPORTS. ALL 25 JOURNALISTS PARTICIPATING IN TOUR WERE REQUIRED TO AGREE TO SUBMIT THEIR REPORTS FOR PRIOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CLEARANCE TO PRISON DEPARTMENT.

4. IN LATER PRESS CONFERENCE, KRUGER SAID THERE WOULD BE NO REMISSION OF ANY OF THE PRISONERS SENTENCES BECAUSE THEY HAD COMMITTED CRIMES AGAINST THE STATE AND NOWHERE IN THE WORLD DO SUCH PRISONERS GET REMISSION. KRUGER ALSO SAID PRISONERS FROM SWA (NAMIBIA) WOULD, AT LATER DATE, BE TRANSFERRED THERE "DEPENDING ON WHAT HAPPENS THERE". HE SAID LACK OF ACCOMMODATIONS IN SWA PRISONS PREVENTED SUCH A MOVE AT THIS TIME.

5. FULL PAGE REPORTS IN LOCAL PRESS WERE ANODYNE AND HELPED BUTTRESS SAG CLAIMS THAT PRISONERS ARE ACCORDED FAIR AND HUMANE TREATMENT (CLIPPINGS BEING POUCHED TO AF). A CAPE TIMES EDITORIAL CALLED THE VISIT A "FORWARD STEP" BUT SAID MAJOR CONCERN WAS NOT SO MUCH ABOUT PRISONS AS ABOUT "PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF DETAINEES UNDER INTERROGATION BY THE SECURITY POLICE". EDITORIAL SAID "EXTRAORDINARY" NUMBER OF DEATHS IN

DETENTION, FREQUENT COMPLAINTS OF TORTURE, BANNING OF
SUCH PUBLICATIONS AS "TORTURE IN SOUTH AFRICA?"
(RHP"3)) AND SAG REFUSAL TO ALLOW INDEPENDENT INQUIRY
REMAINED CAUSES OF "BURNING CONCERN".BOWDLER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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